





# ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States


COMMANDERY OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA

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MEMORIAL MEETING

FEBRUARY 11 1914

1914



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# Commandery of the State of Pennsylvania

FEBRUARY 11 1914

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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 4, 1861, TO APRIL 15, 1865

Born February 12, 1809, in Hardin (La Rue) Co., Kentucky  
Assassinated April 14, 1865; died April 15, 1865, at Washington, D. C.  
Enrolled by Special Resolution April 16, 1865

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*"Some Phases of the Life and Character of  
Abraham Lincoln"*

COMPANION GEORGE R. SNOWDEN





# “SOME PHASES OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN”

BY COMPANION GEORGE R. SNOWDEN

When one comes to consider the life and character of ABRAHAM LINCOLN he feels like the traveler who sees a lofty mountain rising from the plain before him. Cliffs and promontories that nearby confuse the eye, bewilder the sense, and hide from view the awe-inspiring bulk beyond, farther off blend themselves with imposing outline, into one symmetrical form. Lost in admiration he beholds the massive shape slowly lifting itself upward from its base until the top in solitary grandeur cleaves the sky. Too great to climb to survey the vast expanse from its lonely summit he must be content with prospects here and there that please, with views of dale and glen that excite the fancy, of forests that frown in their impenetrable depths.

In the lapse of nigh half a century since the ruthless hand of a cowardly assassin smote ABRAHAM LINCOLN in the place of power, the angry passions of men have become cool, the law has resumed its sway, order everywhere prevails, a broken country has been restored to former limits, upheavals like great tides that shook it from end to end have subsided into the tranquility of a summer lake. It is as if the Divine Voice had said to the turbulent elements, as once it spoke to the troubled waters, “Peace, be still.”

Many books have been written of LINCOLN, a library of itself, and this generation knows him better and holds him higher than the one that lived with him. But legend is already weaving a web of fable about him as it has woven about great men in all the ages. Nothing new may now be told of one who saw life in its most contrasted forms, from poverty and ignorance and obscurity to knowledge, fame and power, but in the time allotted a glance may be cast on some features that marked him a commanding figure in the history of the country. Familiar incidents of his life may be briefly recalled to illustrate remarkable traits in that extraordinary man.

The stock from which LINCOLN came, no doubt English in origin, was nourished in the mountains of Berks. There Daniel Boone was born; from that section of the State emigrated many of the hardy pioneers who settled the Southwest and the West. Not far off Old Paxtang Church, above Harrisburg, was a hive from which swarmed bold men who, advancing through the Cumberland up the Shenandoah Valley, explored forests, climbed mountains, fought and pushed back the red man, planted civilization in the wilderness, founded Commonwealths. In the graveyard of that Church of which Col. John Elder, soldier,

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GEORGE RANDOLPH SNOWDEN

First Sergeant 142d Pennsylvania Infantry August 30, 1862; discharged for promotion September 1, 1862.

First Lieutenant 142d Pennsylvania Infantry September 1, 1862; Captain November 16, 1863; honorably discharged April 7, 1864.

statesman, and divine, was pastor, lie buried more veterans of the Revolution, it is believed, than in any other spot in the whole country.

LINCOLN's ancestors were men of respectability and character, some of them bearing the same name now honored the world over, having attained prominence in the county. His grandfather was killed by the Indians. His father was shiftless and gifted with no more thrift than the proverbial rolling stone. They lived in a log cabin, of a single room, without floor, door or window; until the coming of the step-mother from Kentucky, the floor was the bare ground. She was a remarkable woman, with energy and intelligence, and encouraged young ABRAHAM in earnest efforts to educate himself. He was ever after grateful for her help and sympathy, and held her in tender recollection. They lived in the direst poverty; a little corn from the stumpy field, and the uncertain returns from rifle and trap, supplied their only food. Under age he was hired out by his father and earned by chopping wood and other hard work six dollars a month. But he had the strength and skill to sink his axe deeper in the log than any man in the neighborhood could do. He was so poor that he contracted to "split four hundred rails for every yard of brown jean dyed with white walnut bark that would be necessary to make him a pair of trousers."

But with all this grinding poverty, there was an insatiable thirst to learn; the divine spark of genius must not perish for lack of nourishment. The aggregate of all his schooling, such as it was, did not amount to a single year. A school-master told him where he could buy or borrow "Kirkham's Grammar," that some here will recall, and the future writer of the purest and clearest English walked six miles there and back to obtain it.

His reading was scant, for books were few and precious on that Western frontier. How small the list! The Bible, "Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," "Aesop's Fables," Weem's "Washington," probably but not certainly, Shakespeare and Burns. But he read them again and again until the very words and ideas became part of his being, ready for use at every call, especially the Bible.

With the help of his good friend, the teacher, he studied the art of surveying, and like Washington, was for a while a land surveyor. Like Grant he kept a country store, and met with no better fortune. The qualities needful to keep a country store must not be underrated; two men, afterwards president, tried it and failed. The sum of debts he contracted, a few hundred dollars, was so large in his estimation that he humorously called it "the national debt." His surveying instruments were sold at official sale, but saved to him by the help of generous friends. It was years before he became free of debt, and he applied part of his salary as member of congress to pay off the last dollar. The Black Hawk War broke out; he enlisted in a company of volunteers and, now become of some standing with his neighbors, was elected captain. Their time expired, he entered as private a troop of mounted scouts; his horse was stolen, he was never fortunate in gathering worldly chattels, and in good humor he trudged his way home afoot. Long after in a sketch of his life prepared by himself in 1859 for the coming campaign for nomination as president, he refers to this incident in terms that must touch a cord of sympathy in many a breast here tonight: "Then came the Black Hawk War, and I was elected a captain of volunteers, which gave me more pleasure than any I have had since"—more pleasure than from his seat in Congress, his triumphs on "the stump" or at the bar.



Was this short turn of military duty to prove of value thirty years after? A wise man tells us there is no experience that will not later prove to be of advantage. Gibbon found his service with the militia and his study of military affairs of great use in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" in comprehending campaigns and describing the movements of armies. Many officers who later rose to distinction took their first lessons with the Three Months' Men, and the Mexican War proved to be a splendid school for the highest on both sides in the Civil War.

As was the custom in those early times LINCOLN nominated himself a candidate for the Legislature and was defeated, the only time in his life by the people, but with a handsome vote, in which many Democrats joined, for although a Whig, he admired the character of Andrew Jackson. His election the next year decided the question whether he should be a lawyer or a blacksmith. It was far from an unworthy doubt, for the blacksmith, especially in the country, has a manly, respectable trade. His deliberation shows belief in the dignity of labor, in the manliness of toil. Vulcan, Tubal Cain, all the workers in iron, have ever been held in high repute. Poets have sung, warriors extolled their strength and skill. The shield of Achilles, wrought by the grimy artisan of Olympus, will never rust.

The question is interesting whether had he decided for the anvil and the forge, instead of for the forum, he should ever have attained great distinction. It is altogether likely that he should have, for instances are frequent where men of occupation equally humble, with far less talent, have reached places of honor and power. Andrew Johnson rose to the presidency from a tailor's bench, and Henry Wilson from the shoemaker's, to be senator and vice-president. Genius and force of character spurred on by ambition, are able to overcome great odds.

Elected four times in succession to the legislature, he devoted much time and energy to a series of projects for state internal improvements, a favorite doctrine of the Whig party; but they proved to be failures and afterwards he expressed regret for the part he had taken in them. There he seems to have made his first public, at least official, attack on slavery. He had seen some of its evils on his voyage on a raft to New Orleans, from which he came back all the way on foot. If it be true, as claimed by some, but doubted by others it seems on better grounds, that he said "if he ever got a chance to strike that institution he would strike it hard," it is certain that he never lost occasion to give it an effective blow. Against certain resolutions he signed with others, if he did not write, a protest which set forth "that the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy, but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than abate its evils."

Elected to Congress in 1846 over Peter Cartwright, the noted evangelist, he took little active part in the proceedings, but when he spoke received marked attention. The late Chief Justice Thompson, then chairman of the Judiciary Committee, who sat next to Andrew Johnson, used to say that LINCOLN wore a long linen duster, and when he addressed the House, drew the members about him in crowds to hear his amusing stories abounding in wit and humor. Opposed to the Mexican War, founded, as he believed, on injustice with covert desire to extend slave territory, but holding that politics ought to stop at the frontier, he voted to supply all the men and means the Administration asked. Notwithstanding his gallant services in that war, Grant in his "Memoirs" expresses nearly

the same views. The Whigs, generally, were opposed to the war, but they were shrewd politicians, and LINCOLN himself a delegate to the Convention, chose as their candidate for president Zachary Taylor, the hero of Buena Vista, and elected him over Lewis Cass, who had served with credit in the late war with Great Britain.

While in Congress he introduced a bill to prohibit the slave trade in the District of Columbia; the bringing of the slaves into the District except by government officials who were citizens of slave states; selling slaves to be taken away from the District; fugitive slaves to be returned to the owner; compensation to owners in case of loss, finally, the measure to be submitted to popular vote in the District. But, as to be expected, the bill failed to become a law. This was some years before the Fugitive Slave Law was enacted which dates from 1850. He said in 1858: "I do not now, nor ever did, stand in favor of the unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law," but declared that it ought to be freed "from some of the objections that appertain to it without lessening its efficiency."

From some understanding amongst rival candidates at the time of his nomination he did not seek re-election, but consented in case of difficulty in agreeing on a successor to stand for a second term. Another was chosen but beaten at the polls. Shortly afterward there was a contest for the appointment of General Land Commissioner; LINCOLN supported a friend for the place, but was unsuccessful in his efforts. He now became a candidate himself. It is common to regard this as a crisis in his career. Had he obtained the position what would have been his future? We are told he might have become a mere bureau officer, absorbed in routine administrative duties, neglected his profession, lost if not his interest, his influence in politics. But Thomas A. Hendricks, after holding the place, was elected governor, senator and vice-president, and it is more than probable that LINCOLN also would have overcome its benumbing influence. Grant sought in vain an appointment on the staff. Had he secured it would he have been present at another's or his own Appomattox? But for his mother, Washington would have been a midshipman on a British ship. Can we imagine him a British admiral in our Revolution? Interesting as may be these speculations to amuse the fancy they are vain; for, as we believe with the poet,

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.

Ham. V, II.

MR. LINCOLN was now devoting himself more closely to the practice of his profession. No time to become a profoundly learned lawyer he grasped with broad comprehension the eternal principles of right and justice. He was distinguished for the clearness with which he presented the facts of his cause, and the law bearing upon them, after which he had little to do but to impress them in a clear and convincing way upon the court and the jury. As a public speaker his fame was growing, and he was called to distant parts to address political assemblies. He was thus making friends, gaining popularity and convincing the people of his high character and great ability. A remarkable contest was coming on in which all these qualities would be put to the severest test.

Stephen A. Douglas was a favorite leader of the Democratic party, an orator of distinguished force and eloquence. His term as senator was about to expire, and he was a candidate for re-election. A joint debate was arranged between him



and LINCOLN, the choice of the Republicans, which proved to be a battle of intellectual and forensic giants, and attracted the close attention of the entire country. Douglas' war cry was Popular Sovereignty, a term applied to the right of an incoming state to pass on the question of slavery, the Missouri Compromise, largely owing to his exertions, having been repealed. It was a phrase apt to flatter the pride and patriotism of the people. Is not ours a popular government? Do not the people rule? Ought not the inhabitants of a territory to have the right to choose all their local institutions, including slavery? Douglas was a candidate for the presidency and for fear to offend the South dare not, if he would, attack slavery; as he probably did not believe in the justice of it he could defend it only as an institution of the states that chose to maintain it, and as recognized in the constitution. In view of the natural antipathy of freemen to servitude LINCOLN had a tactical advantage, for he hated slavery and had no hesitation, lost no opportunity to express his mind.

Hence the morality of slavery, its right to exist at all, became the chief, the absorbing issue. As his text LINCOLN chose with sagacity the passage from the Scriptures: A house divided against itself can not stand. He spoke with clearness and force: "I believe this government can not endure half slave and half free;" that the slavery question could "never be successfully compromised." He believed the negro "entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as much entitled to these as the white man." But "I am not in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people." Afterwards he somewhat modified this opinion: The privilege to vote might be wisely conferred upon "the very intelligent and especially upon those who have fought gallantly in our ranks." He regarded slavery as "a moral, a social, a political evil." But at Peoria with a profound sense of the difficulty of wisely dealing with it, and the awful consequences of mistake he declared: "If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do with the existing institution."

Thus Douglas believed that slaves might be brought in and slavery adopted in a territory by the vote of the people of the territory, while LINCOLN was opposed to its extension under any circumstances, holding the Congress had the right and ought to prohibit the introduction of them.

Momentous results depended on this historic contest, more famous now than any ever waged in the country's history; even the celebrated debate between Webster and Hayne fades by comparison into obscurity. Douglas gained the seat in the Senate, but, probably, lost the presidency; LINCOLN lost the senatorship, but reached the presidential chair.

The tremendous impression LINCOLN's speeches made upon his party and the country rendered probable if not certain his nomination for President. But it was not to be had without a struggle. Wise and shrewd politicians were against him; statesmen, like Seward, of high order and long experience, were formidable antagonists. But the discussion with Douglas had done its work. From the convention at Chicago in May of 1860 he came out, but after a fierce and bitter contest, the Republican candidate. The Democratic party was divided, chiefly over the slavery question, and after a campaign remarkable for earnestness and enthusiasm, LINCOLN was elected. "The Rail-splitter" won, where "the Pathfinder" lost.

When he was sworn into office Douglas stood at his side, in fact held his hat while he spoke, in hearty support then and later as long as life lasted. The antagonist of old but now the friend heard with sympathy and approval these touching and memorable words: "I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

The South heard but heeded not. State after state had gone on seceding, as they claimed, from the Union; a Confederacy had been set up at Montgomery with Jefferson Davis as president, and armies created to achieve by force their independence. All appeals to reconsider their hasty acts fell upon unwilling ears. The North in general did not really believe they meant war, and it was not until they fired on Fort Sumter that the sleeping lion was roused. Then occurred an uprising of an indignant people that astonished the world.

MR. LINCOLN chose for his cabinet his chief opponents at Chicago: Seward, Chase, Cameron, and others. Some were well-known to the country, some had yet to make their mark.

Many thought that Seward would prove the master mind to overshadow his fellows, perhaps the president himself. In a speech on the admission of California he had said, "there is a higher law than the constitution," and at Rochester in 1858: "It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-holding nation, or entirely a free labor nation." These views, very advanced for the time, held by many to be very radical, appealed with force of conviction to a large part of his countrymen; in consequence he had a strong and influential party at his back. He was a very able lawyer, had been governor of the state of New York, and long a leading senator. The force of LINCOLN'S character was soon made evident. He drafted himself the first circular to the foreign powers on the state of our affairs at home and abroad, a document of extraordinary merit, and directed his secretary of state to put it in the usual diplomatic form for transmissal to our ministers abroad. Seward presented a scheme to the cabinet whereby one member should be charged with management and direction of all our affairs, "to devolve the energetic prosecution of the war on some member of the cabinet," in other words practically a dictatorship. "While he was not seeking it, he would not decline it." The president quietly intimated they could get on well enough without a dictator, that he would save the need of one, and ignored the scheme. He retained the vast powers of the presidency in his own hands, unquestioned to the end. For his great services to the country in our foreign affairs in a most difficult time Mr. Seward's memory is held in grateful recollection.

MR. LINCOLN'S chief object was to make the contest with the South a war for the Union only. In his inaugural he declared, "The Union is unbroken," that "no state, upon its mere motion, could lawfully get out of the Union; resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void." To him, the abolition of slavery was an incident, not the purpose held in view. Before inauguration he wrote to Seward, he did "not wish to meddle with slavery as it now existed." Had he entertained and made known such intention it is doubtful if so many



who cheerfully rallied to restore the Union would have come to his support. He declared "the abolition of slavery was not worth 300,000 lives, but the preservation of the Union was." To Horace Greely, 19th Aug., 1862, in answer to his self-inspired, self-constructed "Prayer of 20,000,000 of People" he wrote: "My paramount object is to save the Union, and not to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it. And if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it. And if I could save it by freeing some, and leaving others alone, I would do that." Further: "My enemies pretend that I am now carrying on the war for the sole purpose of abolition. So long as I am President, it shall be carried on for the sole purpose of restoring the Union."

From the very first Greely was constantly giving him trouble. In the editorial columns of the "Tribune" it was declared that "if the Cotton States shall decide that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace;" and on the 23rd February, 1861, that "if the Cotton States choose to form an independent nation, they have a clear moral right to do so." Gladstone improved but little on these plain words when he said "Jefferson Davis has created a nation." Secession was in the air. Fernando Wood proposed that New York should become a free independent city, and Daniel E. Sickles, in the House of Representatives, threatened that the secession of the Southern States should be followed by that of New York City.

Abolitionists other than Greeley treated MR. LINCOLN contemptuously. Wendell Phillips asked: "Who is this truckster in politics? Who is this county court advocate?" He had the audacity to publish an article entitled "ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the Slave-hound of Illinois." He regarded the Administration "as a civil and military failure." His re-election "I shall consider the end of the Union, and its reconstruction on terms worse than disunion." Fremont, too, who had been relieved as Hunter was, for freeing the slaves in his department on his own motion, had his fling: "The Administration is politically, militarily and financially a failure."

The Democrats, in open opposition to his policy, objected to any other than voluntary emancipation by the people of the South themselves. Stanton broke out in opprobrious terms unfit to repeat. The Abolitionists were furious that he did not at once free the negroes. Many leading Republicans, still within the limits of the party, denounced him, as we shall see further on, both officially and personally. But this extraordinary man, beset with the clamor of his enemies, pushed his way forward, like a great ship in midocean, regardless of storm and tempest, true to the masterful hand that holds the wheel. He had his own plan that he would unfold in due time.

He was preparing to free the slaves as commander-in-chief, as a war measure to bring victory to our armies in the field. To a delegation of clergymen from Chicago in September, 1862, he answered: "I view this matter (proclamation of emancipation) as a practical war measure, to be decided on according to the advantages or disadvantages it may offer to the suppression of the rebellion." He had no doubt of his right under the constitution to issue it. In a letter to a mass meeting held at Springfield he wrote 26th August, 1863: "I think the constitution invests its commander-in-chief with all the law of war. The most that can be said, if so much, is, that slaves are property. Is there, has there ever been, any question that by the law of war, property, both of enemies and friends, may be taken when needed?"



At last on the 1st January, 1863, he issued the proclamation: "By virtue of his power as commander-in-chief in time of actual armed rebellion and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing the rebellion," the President ordered (note the military term) ordered that "all persons held as slaves in certain states and parts of states (designated) should be thenceforward free."

The proclamation freed the slaves within the limits held by the Union armies, but no farther. Those blacks were free, but slavery could be restored by the states when they resumed their places in the Union. To abolish it for all time was now the paramount purpose. In June, 1864, MR. LINCOLN said the abolition of slavery was "a fitting and necessary condition to the final success of the Union cause." But how should it be done? He himself as a civil measure had always favored emancipation with compensation to owners, and colonization. Congress, in accord with the views set forth in his message of 16th March, 1862, passed a resolution that "the United States ought to co-operate with any state which might adopt a gradual emancipation of slavery," and placed at the disposal of the president \$600,000 for an experiment in colonization. As late as February, 1865, he worked out a scheme whereby "Congress should empower him to distribute a sufficient sum of money between the slave states in due proportion to their respective slave populations (to be divided amongst the owners) on condition that all resistance to the national authority should be abandoned and cease on or before the first day of April next." On submitting it to his cabinet it was "unanimously disapproved." He doubted the power of Congress to prohibit slavery in the reconstructed states. "I conceive that I may in an emergency do things on military grounds which cannot be done constitutionally by Congress." He favored an amendment to the constitution which he did not live to see adopted. The Thirteenth Amendment was submitted to the states by resolution of Congress passed on the 1st February, 1865, and proclaimed a part of the fundamental law on the 18th December following. It provides that: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Thus finally passed away the "peculiar institution," the subject of agitation for the previous fifty years, and the blot was forever wiped off the map. The "cornerstone" of the Confederacy, according to Alexander H. Stephens, that "slavery is the negro's natural and moral condition," crumbled to pieces. It may be left to moralists and economists to quarrel over the question, happily now merely academic, whether if left to itself it would have died of itself. Even in imperial Rome pagan lawyers declared slavery to be against natural right.

LINCOLN'S nomination and election to a second term were not effected without much commotion in the political world. The Democratic convention at Chicago, under the lead of Vallandigham and other extremists, put a plank in the platform declaring that "after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war," a convention ought to be called of all the states or other peaceable means taken to restore peace "on the basis of a federal union of the states," which General McClellan, their candidate, repudiated. The radical Republicans nominated Fremont in May, but he withdrew in September. Chase, whom LINCOLN had taken into his cabinet, and after his resignation appointed Chief Justice, hoped to be the nominee, but when the Ohio legislature declared for LINCOLN, also withdrew. An effort to nominate Grant he brushed abruptly aside.

The Democratic party took a more dignified stand than the so-called Reactionaries. They charged that the constitution had been violated and many of them in so awful a contingency would have preferred a divided country with the constitution intact to a united country with the constitution prostrate. While the reactionaries seemed to be moved by personal spite, quarrels over patronage, above all, by an intense desire to make the president accept their views and move more rapidly than he was disposed. Enemies of MR. LINCOLN within his own party were constantly attacking him. Mr. Julian made a serious mistake in saying "that of the more earnest and thorough-going Republicans in both houses of Congress probably not one in ten favored the nomination of MR. LINCOLN." Thaddeus Stevens declared in the House that Arnold, of Illinois, was the only member who was a political friend of the President, and "the story goes that LINCOLN himself sadly admitted the truth of it." Pomeroy, of Kansas, proclaimed that his re-election was practically impossible. Winter Davis and B. F. Wade published an address in the N. Y. "Tribune," "To the Supporters of the Government," in which they charged encroachment of the Executive on the authority of Congress, "even impugning the honesty of his purpose in words of direct personal insult."

Meanwhile the war was going on successfully to its inevitable conclusion and all opposition was vain. The majority of the people thought with LINCOLN, that it was no time to swap horses when crossing the stream.

On taking the oath a second time he spoke these words which touch the heart because they came from his: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Of the history of the war much might be, but little need here be said, for it is too familiar to the older, perhaps to the younger Companions, now to rehearse. As the last of the chief commanders he selected Grant, who led the armies to final victory at Appomattox. When Grant took command he stipulated that he was to be absolutely free from all interference, especially on the part of Stanton. LINCOLN was most generous in his confidence and in his support. He wrote: "The particulars of your plan I neither know nor seek to know." Grant replied in like spirit: "Should my success be less than I desire and expect, the least I can say, the fault is not with you." LINCOLN lived to see the Union armies victorious at Appomattox and Lee with the brave but exhausted Army of Northern Virginia give up the struggle. Then, the Union safe, the light went out; a great soul passed on to its Maker.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was a true product of our institutions. In no other country could his career have been possible; only a republic based on a democracy could have produced him. He had ambition to rise, but it was not "vaulting," nor was it "that sin" whereby "fell the angels." In an address to the people in his first canvass for the legislature he described it: "Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether it be true or not, I can say for one that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed by my fellow-men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem." Such principles were in accord with fair desire to reach place and power, where he could carry them into effect. He believed in



the truths of the Declaration he so often proclaimed: All men are born free and equal. His character appealed to the sympathy and affections of the people. He was "Honest Abe," because while in business, of his own motion he trudged miles to refund an accidental overcharge; because he took trouble to make up for a careless underweight; because he paid off his "national debt," with interest, every cent. He never cared for money or tried to accumulate it. To Chase, wishing to introduce a delegation of bankers who had come to Washington to discuss the financial situation, he exclaimed, "Money! I don't know anything about money! I never had enough of my own to fret me, and I have no opinion about it any way."

In the usual sense he was not a politician. Without his ear to the ground no man ever knew better the heart of the plain people: he was one of them himself. He said, "God loves the plain people, he made so many of them." He had their virtues, honesty, truth, courage, none of their faults. A model of the domestic virtues, he had the family relations that make the bone and sinew of the land. No scandal, public or private, was ever fastened upon him, none was even so much as hinted. Not strictly a religious man he believed in the Christian's God whom he so often invoked and lived in accord with the morals of Christian life. He had the confidence, affection, respect of every man that knew him, of every man that once had seen him. How it stirred the heart, roused the spirit of patriotism in the young soldier's breast, in the breast of many of you, to behold that dignified figure in the dress they wore at home, a citizen in black as the head of the army on review, the country's institutions personified! Of undoubted personal courage he stood under fire, perhaps without due heed, but eager to witness Early's repulse at Ft. Stevens, our soldiers and theirs in actual battle. Like Aristotle's magnanimous man, virtuous, conversant with great and extraordinary honors, his gait was slow, his tone of voice grave, his pronunciation firm. (Ethics, lib. IV.)

As a statesman he holds place in the highest rank. It is amazing to consider how one with no previous experience could conduct the government with success to the end of a war that convulsed a continent, that disturbed the whole world. Yet as he wrote in his message in December, 1864, the population had actually increased during the preceding four years, and material resources were more complete and abundant than ever. Peculiarly delicate and difficult were our relations with foreign powers. There was impending danger of intervention by Great Britain and France. The French were in Mexico with hopes to stay; the English, sending forth armed ships in the name of neutrality to destroy our commerce; the Canadians, giving shelter to enemies and spies too mean to bear arms, a refuge to carry on their nefarious designs. Our only friend was Russia, to prove that friendship by sending a fleet at a critical time to ward off interference. It is said the English people were in sympathy with the Union cause; so they were in the same way in our Revolution. Their hostile temper was shown in swift anger at the taking of Mason and Slidell by Captain Wilkes off the Trent. Although the gallant officer received thanks of Congress and the applause of the country, it was a mistake and to avert war had to be undone. But there were plenty of precedents in English history to justify it; some of them led to the War of 1812. As late as the Spanish War the British Ambassador guided other foreign ministers to the White House with intent to overawe and intimidate the President. Their actions and purposes in Mexico now are left to the future to unfold.

It took a skilful pilot to steer through these difficult channels; the least swerve from the course was sure to bring collision with a sunken rock. Foreign affairs were ably handled by the secretary of state, but supreme direction was in the hands of the President. Vigorous and emphatic protests were made to the British that led, through our having the most formidable fleet afloat, to the Alabama Treaty; to the evacuation of Mexico when Sheridan with 50,000 veterans, some of you among them, moved to the frontier. Men have tried in vain to tell the debt of gratitude the country owes to the wisdom, firmness, foresight, patriotism of ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

It has been told of him that he stands apart in striking solitude. He had no confidants about him to warp and deceive his judgment, to boast afterward of their perfidy. His ear was ever open to advice of friends, even to hear the abuse of enemies, but he acted of his own will, unswerved by influence or threats, without fear but with due heed for results. He was chief magistrate. Imperious Stanton more than once was reminded by him, gently but firmly, that one was Secretary, the other President.

LINCOLN was fond of company, even of the plainest; no old friend too humble to entertain, to talk with of the past, to recall events of their early life. As a young man he was subject to spells of depression, and perhaps never entirely recovered from the effects of them. They showed, as many of you have seen, in his countenance when not lighted up by a kindly smile. Was his sadness due to an overwhelming sense of responsibility? for we know that responsibility sobers. The late Chief Justice Thompson, who knew him well, and had seen Alexander of Russia, the liberator of the serfs, afterward also assassinated, used to say they had the saddest faces he ever saw on men. Were the shadows of impending doom upon them? LINCOLN often spoke of doing his duty at the risk of his life. At the State House he closed his speech with this remarkable statement some of you may have heard: "But I have said nothing but what I am willing to live by, and, if it be the pleasure of Almighty God, to die by." At another time he felt that he had no moral right to shrink from his duty, nor even to count the chances of his own life in what might follow. He had rather die, as he said, than restore to slavery the blacks he had set free.

In his book, *De Trobriand*, of the regular army, relates that he could tell from the countenances of his men who were to fall in the coming battle. Was it that "far-away look" some physicians skilled to "minister to a mind diseased" have known and described? Was it with LINCOLN, the impress of the conscious soul upon the body it was about to leave?

A most genial, kindly man, he seldom said of another anything severe, but when pushed too far he knew how to strike back. He had "a giant's strength," but thought it "tyrannous to use it like a giant." One Forquer had been berating him as a young man who must be "taken down." Forquer had built for himself the finest house in Springfield, and put on it the first lightning-rod ever seen in the neighborhood. LINCOLN declared from "the stump:" "I would rather die now than, like the gentleman, live to see the day when I should have to erect a lightning-rod to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God!"

His fund of anecdote was inexhaustible, but many attributed to him are of doubtful source. He told them to relieve his feelings or as a happy, amusing illustration, even in the gravest affairs. In his biographical sketch alluded to he did not refrain from using the homeliest illustrations. "If any personal descrip-



tion is thought desirable, it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and gray eyes. No other marks and brands recollected." He was fond of metaphor drawn from life on the farm. When he allowed Greeley to go to Niagara Falls, on a vain errand as he knew, to confer with self-styled Confederate Commissioners, with mind probably on an unruly steer tied with a long halter, he gave him, as he declared, rope enough to hang him. When Hooker, after Chancellorsville, proposed to cross the Rappahannock and attack Lee's rear corps at Fredericksburg, he wrote him: "In one word, I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear, without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other." At the famous conference at Hampton Roads in January, 1865, he persisted that he could not enter into any agreement with "parties in arms against the government." Hunter, of Virginia, cited precedents "of this character between Charles I. of England and the people in arms against him." LINCOLN replied: "I do not profess to be posted in history. On all such matters I will turn you over to Seward. All I distinctly recollect about the case of Charles I. is, that he lost his head!"

The flight and pursuit of Jefferson Davis was an exciting episode. Asked if he was willing to let him escape, LINCOLN said it reminded him of a circuit rider who late at night, tired and wet, sought rest and refreshment for himself and horse at a settler's cabin. The farmer asked, "Parson, will you take a drink?" He replied, "Oh, my, no, I never drink." "Well, then, will you have a lemonade?" "Yes," he would have that. "Shall I put a stick in it?" "Well now," hesitating, "if you can put it in sort of unbeknownst like." If the late president of the confederacy could escape "unbeknownst like," so much the better for the country. The result, as usual, proved LINCOLN's wisdom. For the capture greatly embarrassed the government and showed that a man cannot be convicted in the district where the treason was committed, if the whole community be involved, because, although Davis was indicted and arraigned, they dare not try him in the face of certain acquittal, unless they packed the jury, a crime almost equal to treason itself.

LINCOLN's speeches on the rostrum and before the jury were full of anecdotes like these, to amuse the fancy or please the crowd. But his oratory and his writings have a far higher merit. They are in the choicest form of English composition. His letter to a poor mother who he heard had lost five sons in the war, still hangs on the walls of Brasenose College, Oxford, as an example of pure and perfect English. Recently the Chancellor of Oxford asked to say who was the greatest English orator, replied, ABRAHAM LINCOLN was the greatest in the English language. His speech at Gettysburg as a model of funereal oratory took the place of Pericles' over the dead of Marathon, for 2,000 years held up as the greatest of its kind. In a few moments he gained there more lasting fame than Meade who fought the battle. Again in the contest for fame between letters and arms, carried on since Alexander at the tomb of Achilles longed for another Homer, letters won. How full of tender and noble thoughts must have been the soul that on the spur of the moment, as it were, could utter forth a master-piece to last as long as time! Well may they place that immortal speech on the stately monument that stands in honor to the soldiers of Pennsylvania on the field where it was spoken, but men will read it when the marks in bronze that set it forth



are worn away from storm and rust. Glorious field! illustrious for heroic deeds of arms, for oratory's highest flight; greater than Marathon, for here men who met as foes now gather as friends, citizens of a common country.

With all his extraordinary faculties he had none of the eccentricities of genius. His patience under most exasperating circumstances, was without limit; when tried almost beyond human endurance he replied without passion, without complaint, only to correct mistake. He was misunderstood by his enemies, not fully appreciated by his friends. But the harsh things said of him in his lifetime, all too short, are now forgotten in universal reverence for his memory. Of a heart too tender willingly to sign a death warrant, he approved a bill, on conviction of its necessity, to authorize generals in the field to execute spies and deserters. The quality of his mercy was not strained; he was the very personification of that charity that suffereth long and is kind. But he was always the man, *primus inter pares*, first amongst his peers. That one of his kindly nature should perish at the hands of an assassin passes all understanding.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN in character, ability, and achievement ranks with the great men of his time, with the great men of all time. In contemplating him we believe with Cicero: In every great man is some whiff of the divine breath.<sup>1</sup> While men of genius have some qualities, opinions, and fortunes in common, in others they widely differ.<sup>2</sup> With Hamilton, LINCOLN believed in a strong government; with Jefferson, in the virtue and intelligence of the people. Athens, weary of Aristides "the Just," banished him; America honored "Honest Abe" living, reveres him dead. Cato, held for just and fearless, to save their keep, sold his slaves in their old age; LINCOLN, to hold fast the integrity of his country, made free men of a million slaves.

From the story of this noble life we draw the lesson that duty must be done, "as God gives us to see" our duty, at all risks, and that as Providence raised up him to face disunion and a civil war, so will He raise up another, not a LINCOLN perhaps, but one, like him, when the time shall come, with stout heart and bold front, with wisdom and virtue, with unbounded love for his country, to meet all dangers that may threaten the republic.

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1. Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit.

2. Utenim in corporibus magnae dissimilitudines sunt (alios videmus velocitate ad cursum, alios viribus ad luetandum valere, itemque in formis aliis dignitatem inesse, aliis venustatem), sic in animis existent majores etiam varietates. Erat in L. Crasso, &c. De Officiis, I, 30, 107.

